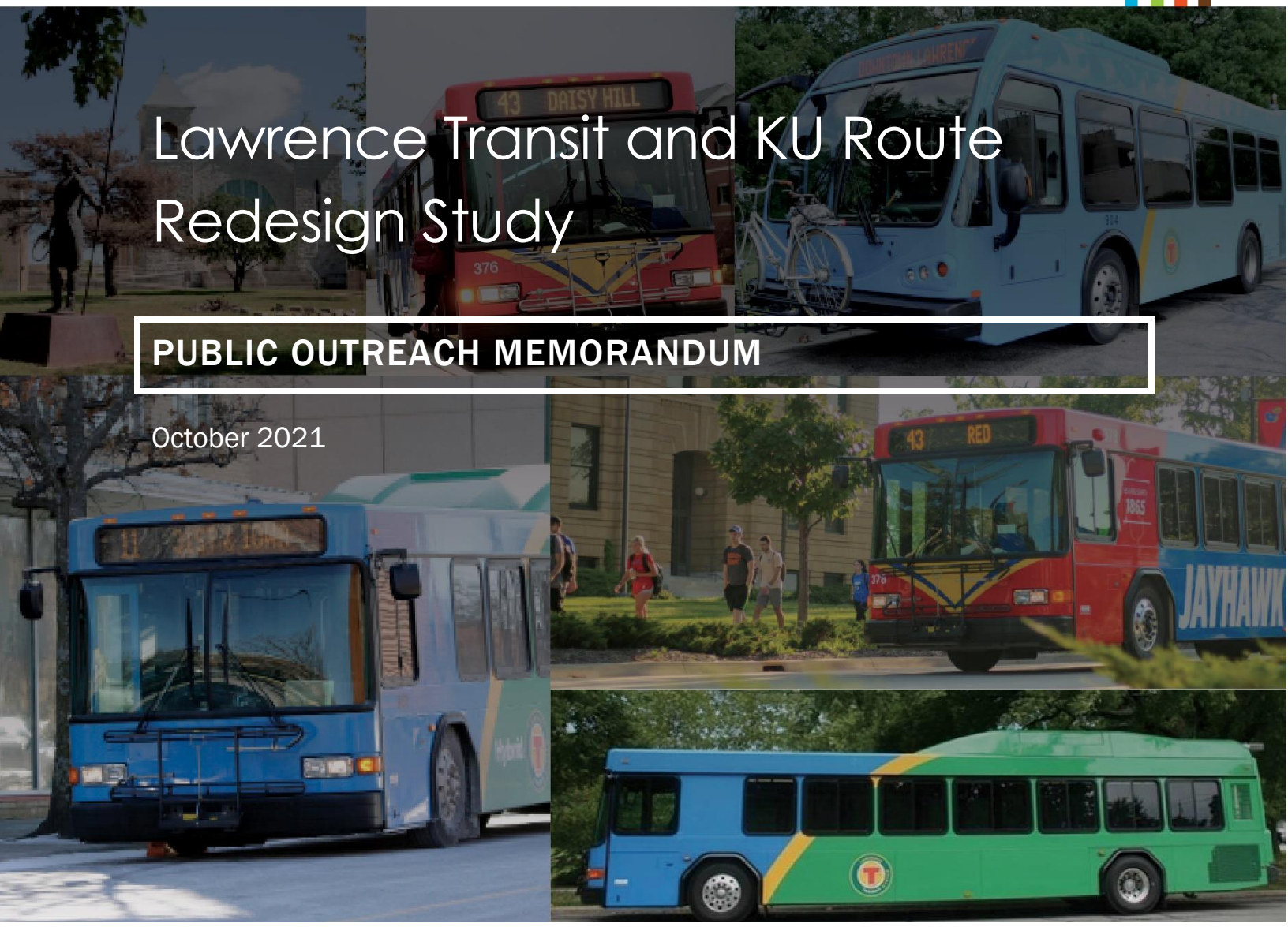
FOURSQUARE ITP
INTEGRATED TRANSPORTATION PLANNING

Lawrence Transit and KU Route Redesign Study

PUBLIC OUTREACH MEMORANDUM

October 2021



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In partnership with:

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1. INTRODUCTION

During the summer of 2021, Lawrence Transit and KU on Wheels conducted outreach with riders of both systems as well as the general public. The purpose of this first round of public outreach is to receive input from current riders and community members about the way they use transit, reasons for riding or not riding transit, and their opinions and priorities for future service.

In support of this goal, public outreach consisted of two phases, each of which is summarized in this memorandum:

- Focus groups conducted via Zoom with university affiliates, frontline staff, major employers, community resources, and the general public.
- Surveys distributed online as well as in paper copies distributed at key locations.

Focus groups were asked questions about transit services in Lawrence, including what is working well and what could improve. Survey respondents were asked questions about their ridership habits, most common transit trip, opinions about transit, and demographics. Both groups were asked trade-off questions about their preferences for transit services in Lawrence, and both groups were given the opportunity to provide free-form responses and comments. The input collected through the focus groups and survey will be used to inform service scenario development in Lawrence.

2. FOCUS GROUPS

Lawrence Transit and KU on Wheels held five public meetings, one each for university affiliates, community resources, and the general public, and two with frontline staff. The general public focus group was two hours, and all other focus groups were held for one hour. A total of 23 people attended the focus groups. The team held a focus group for major employers that did not have any attendees.

Eight people affiliated with the University of Kansas (KU) attended the focus group. This included students and staff working with international programs and grants. A total of nine staff participated in two focus groups. Four participants attended the community resources focus group. This included library staff, a representative from the Healthy Built Environment Council, and interested citizens. Two participants joined for the generic public focus group.

2.1. What are Lawrence Transit and/or KU on Wheels doing well?

Many focus group participants mentioned that drivers are helpful and friendly and can successfully de-escalate situations. The university focus group also mentioned that drivers are especially helpful with new KU students. People praised the transit system, believe that it works well overall, and that other communities of similar sizes do not have similar service. Staff were happy with the types of services provided and specifically mentioned the Nightline, SafeRide, and paratransit services. Participants were happy with bus routes and one felt that the transfer between routes 1 and 11 is handled well.

2.2. How can Lawrence Transit and KU on Wheels improve?

Participants had many and various ideas about how to improve transit services in Lawrence. Many suggestions revolved around adding new types of service, include holiday service, Sunday service, evening and late-night

service, or new express routes connecting opposite sides of town. Other suggestions involved improving existing service, such as increasing service, reducing travel times for passengers, or improving on-time performance. One group requested implementing a fare-free policy.

Two different groups mentioned coordinating service with KC services, including with the K10 Connector, which participants said does not run late enough or enough on weekends. Additional park & rides were also suggested as a way for people living farther away to more easily access services. Some participants suggested ideas for making understanding the service easier, with the Night Line as one example. Finally, one participant suggested having a "free bus" day every few months so that people can try out the service.

2.3. Do passengers have the tools they need to understand and use the service?

Focus group participants had both positive things to say about available tools and suggestions for improvements. First, participants at the public focus group stated that the website is informative and interactions with customer service agents have been very positive. The university group noted that the app works well. Drivers are helpful, although staff also pointed out that sometimes City riders rely on bus drivers to assist them with directions and information.

While good tools exist, there may be barriers for riders to access or understand them. One participant noted that many seniors do not understand how to use a cell phone or any of the new tools on the website. Bus brochures and the Rider Guide require experience to read and can be confusing for international students who may not be familiar with the format. Staff thought that lack of access to technology in general is a barrier, and that the trip planner interface is difficult for many riders to use. Staff also noted that sometime routes are called by nicknames, such as the "Walmart to Walmart Bus", which can be confusing for riders because that name is not printed on materials. Staff also suggested that larger maps with landmarks on them could be more helpful to customers. Many riders ask about the same locations, so printing signage about common points of interest would be helpful. In addition, language barriers are sometimes a problem on buses. Overall, there are many good tools available, although it requires research to become a bus expert.

2.4. Is the passenger environment inviting?

Overall, focus group participants believe that the passenger environment is inviting. Participants have had positive interactions with customer service and drivers are pleasant. One participant has also had a positive experience with the paratransit service.

Participants also listed a number of suggestions that would make the passenger environment more inviting. Improving stops with benches, chairs, or shelters was mentioned in two of the focus groups, which would help elderly riders in particular and any rider in inclement weather. Participants also had suggestions about buses; they suggested that City buses needed to be updated and that KU on Wheels has newer buses; some buses need to be cleaner; and the noise on some buses makes it hard to communicate.

2.5. Model Communities

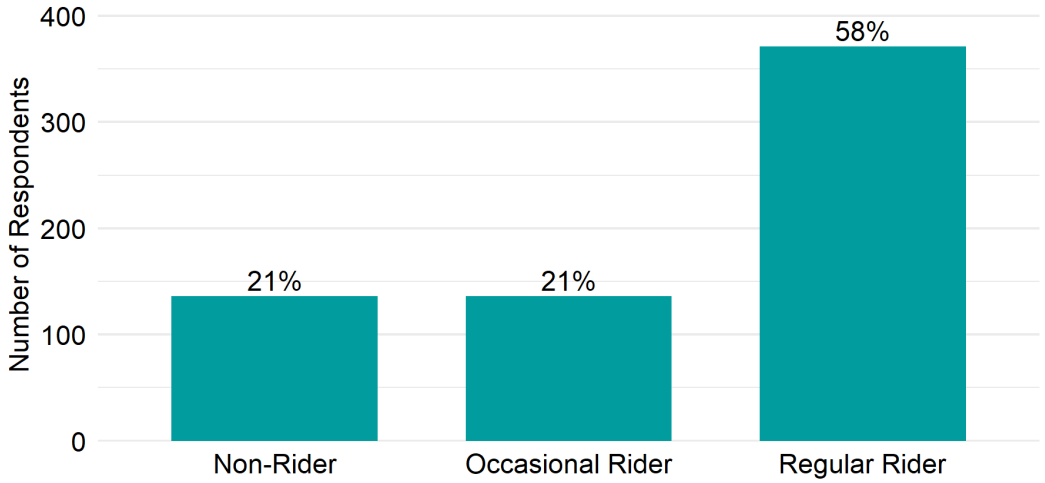
Participants in focus groups were asked if there are other communities that get transit right. Many mentioned the Kansas City streetcar as a success. It was marketed well, serves population places, is free, and has good ridership. Champaign, Illinois was also mentioned as a transit-supportive, university town that combines university and city transit. Topeka was also an example, although it is larger than Lawrence and more spread out.

3. SURVEY

In addition to targeted focus groups, an online survey collected feedback about transit service from the public. The survey was available online in the summer of 2021 and received a total of 661 responses. Nearly three-fifths of the responses were from regular riders, who ride transit at least weekly; one-fifth from occasional riders, who ride transit less than weekly; and a one-fifth from non-riders, who reported never riding transit, as shown in **Figure 1**. Throughout this report, "riders" includes regular riders and occasional riders.

The survey asked respondents to provide basic demographic information, details about their transit usage, information about their most common transit trip, opinions about existing service, and preferences for future service.

Figure 1: Survey Responses by Rider Type



3.1. Key Survey Findings

Several key themes and findings emerged from the summary and analysis of the rider survey responses, including the following:

- KU has a clear effect on the makeup of transit ridership in Lawrence, including the number of riders who are students, young, and lower income.
- "Choice" riders represent a significant portion of ridership; nearly half of riders have daily access to their own vehicle, and an additional 14 percent of riders have occasional access to a shared vehicle. However, not owning a car remains a top reason why riders choose transit.
- While home locations were spread throughout Lawrence, destinations of the respondents' most common transit trip were highly concentrated in KU and in downtown Lawrence.
- Work and school are the most common trip types. Most outbound trips happen between 7:00 a.m.–11:00 a.m. on weekdays, with the return trip happening weekdays 3:00 p.m.–7:00 p.m. More than half of common trips (56 percent) are under 30 minutes.
- Most respondents said that if the bus had not been available for their most recent trip, they would have replaced the trip by walking (27 percent) or driving (23 percent).
- Respondents reacted positively to existing service, with the highest scores in professional and courteous staff, reasonable fares, and comfortable and well-kept buses. The lowest scores included the ease of

understanding the website, schedules that meet travel needs, and the ease of understanding maps and schedules.

- Riders preferred improving weekday and Saturday service rather than adding Sunday service; maintaining fares rather than eliminating fares at the risk of reduced service; improving service rather than expanding service; and providing more frequent bus service rather than longer service hours.
- Respondents who left additional comments were mostly likely to write in about route suggestions (43 responses); fares (25 responses), mostly requesting free fares systemwide or a free fare program for low-income riders; adding Sunday service (17 responses); more frequent service (16 responses); and adding bus stop amenities such as benches and shelters (11 responses).

3.2. Demographics

All survey respondents, regardless of transit usage, were asked a series of demographic questions.

3.2.1. Age

Figure 2 shows survey respondents' age ranges, broken out by rider and non-rider. Riders who responded to the survey are most likely to fall in the 18-24 age range, while non-riders are most likely to be 35-44 years old. This likely reflects the fact that many riders are KU students. **Figure 3** shows the breakdown of Lawrence's population by age according to the U.S. Census Bureau. Slightly over a quarter of Lawrence's total population falls in the 18-24 age range.

Figure 2: Survey Responses by Age

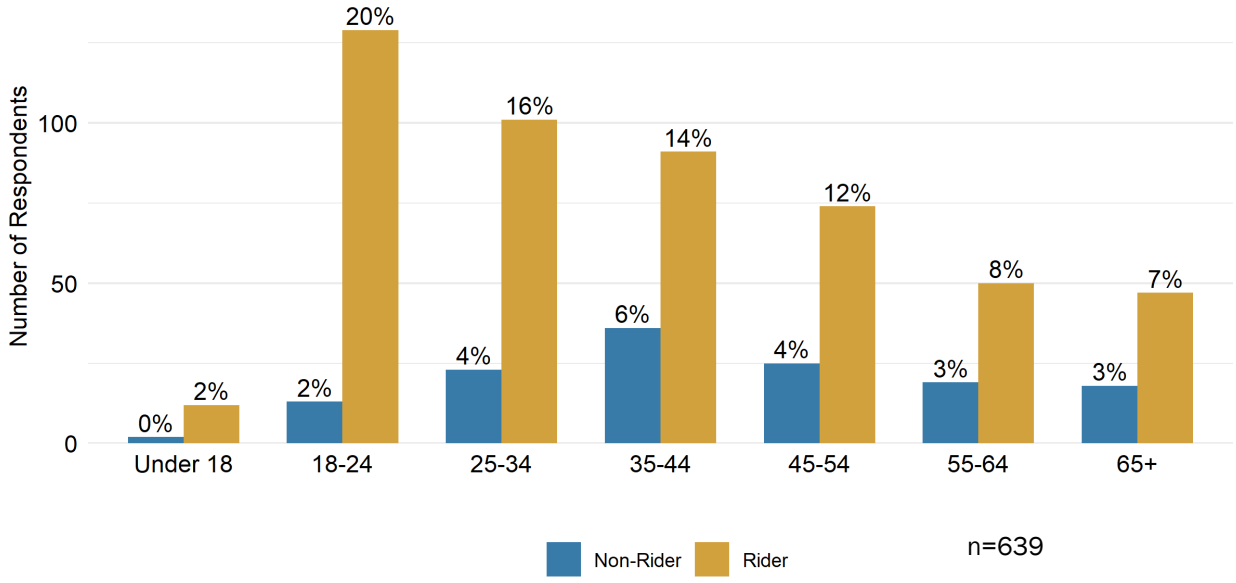
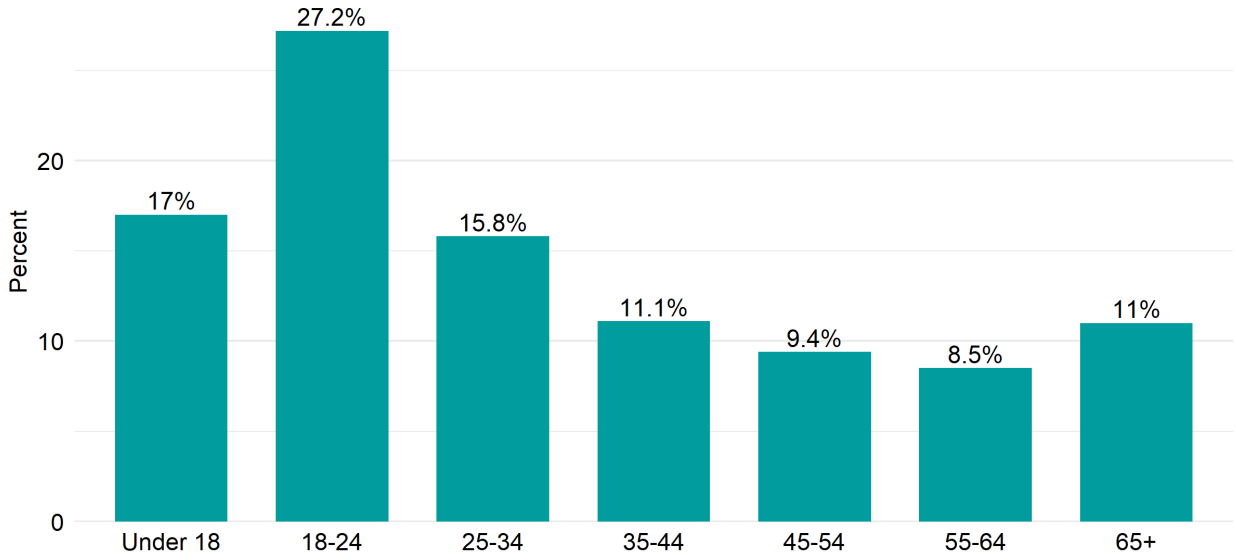


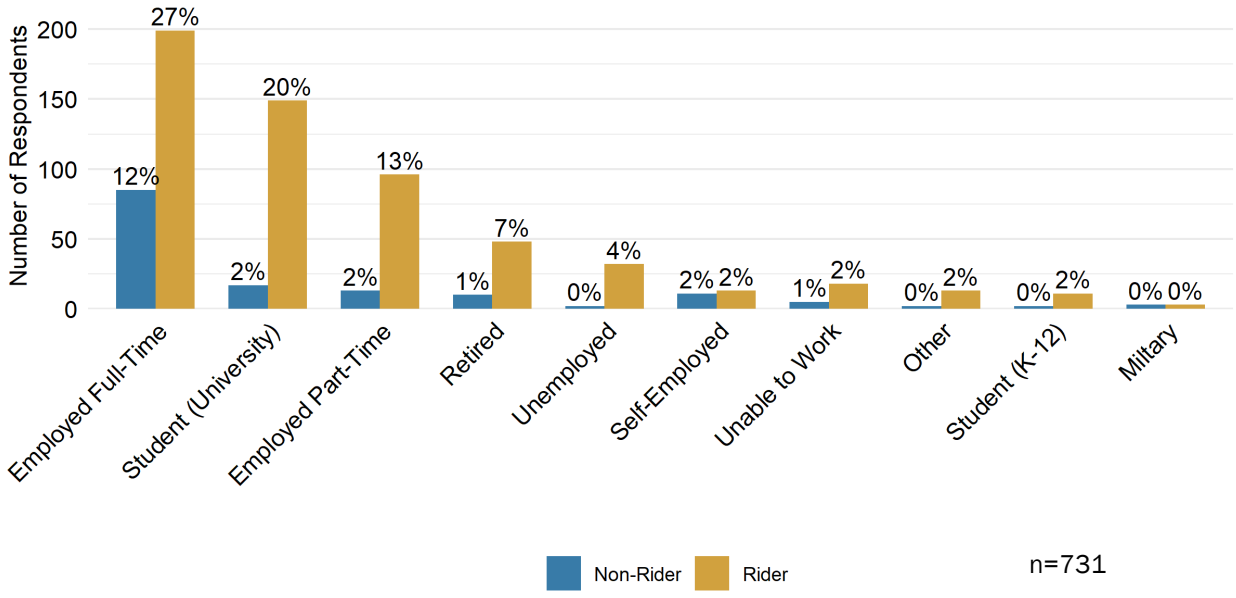
Figure 3: Population by Age in Lawrence, KS (U.S. Census Bureau, ACS 2019 5-year estimates)



3.2.2. Employment Status

Figure 4 shows survey respondents' employment status, broken out by riders and non-riders. For both riders and non-riders, most respondents are employed full-time, a student at the university, or employment part-time. Some respondents selected multiple answers.

Figure 4: Survey Responses by Employment Status



3.2.3. Race and Ethnicity

Figure 5 shows race and ethnicity of respondents, broken out by rider status. **Figure 6** shows the overall race and ethnicity characteristics of Lawrence from the U.S. Census Bureau. Survey respondents were largely white, with some Asian and Hispanic/Latino respondents, which closely matches the racial makeup of Lawrence.

Figure 5: Survey Responses by Race and Ethnicity

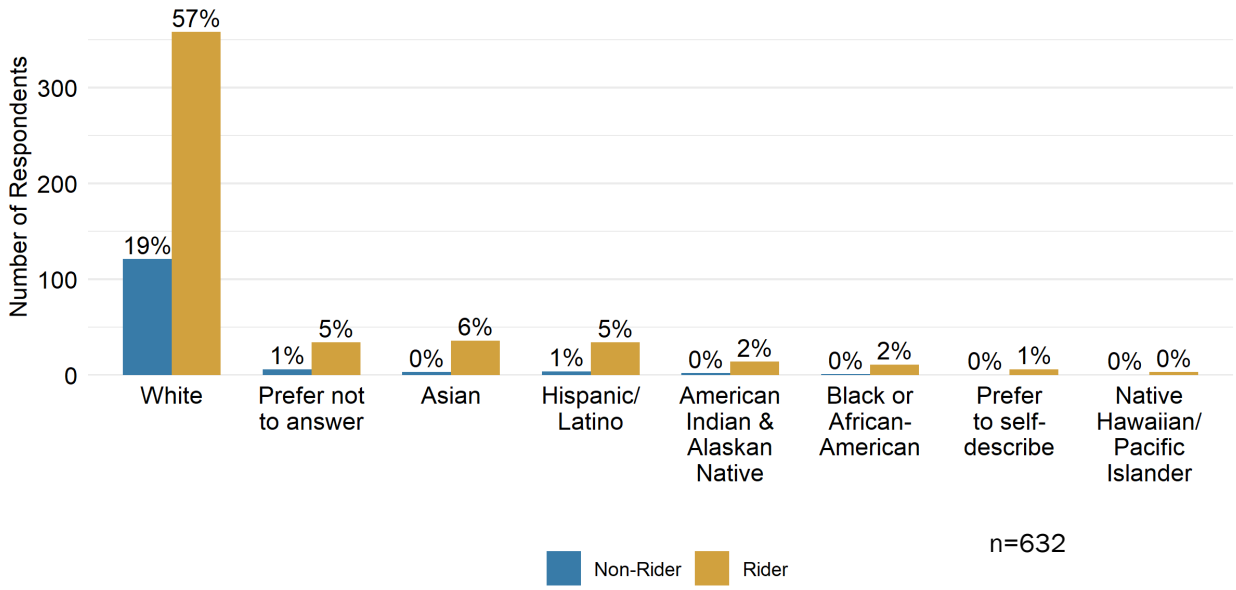
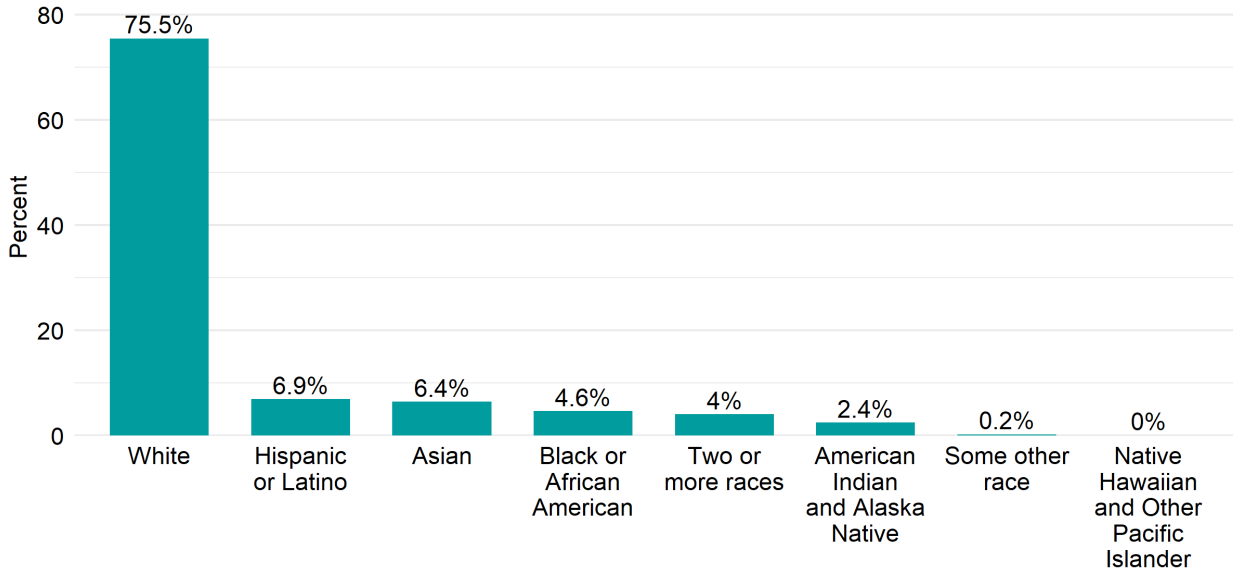


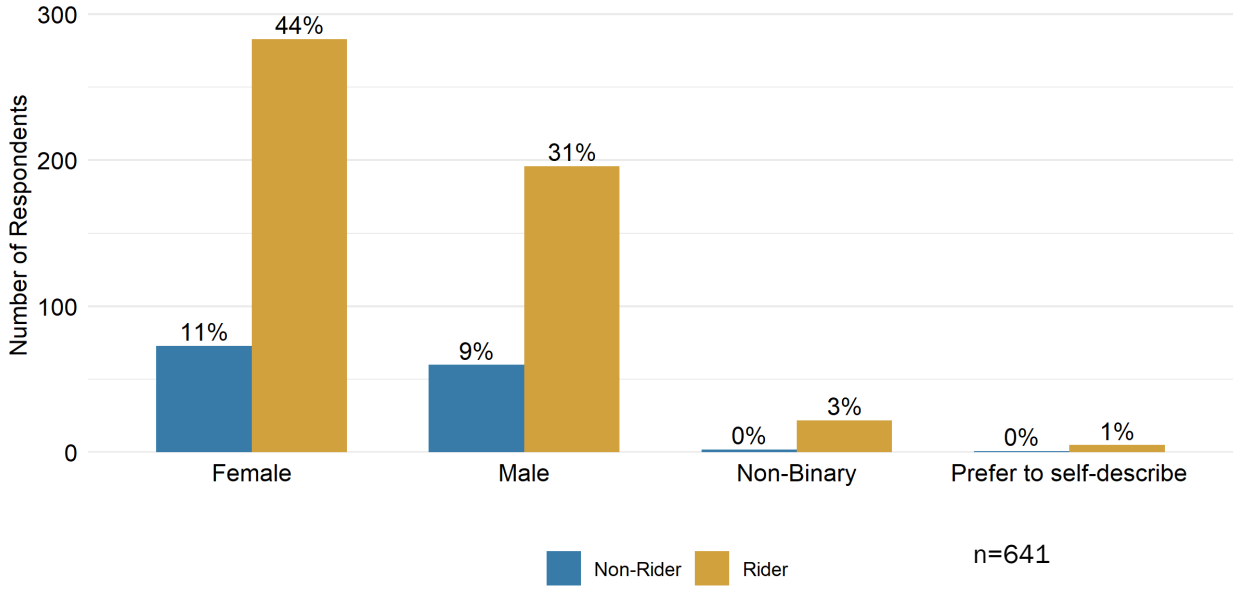
Figure 6: Race and Ethnicity in Lawrence, KS, U.S. Census Bureau, ACS 2019 5-year estimates



3.2.4. Gender Identity

Figure 7 shows the gender identity of survey respondents, broken out by rider status. Survey respondents, and especially those that ride transit, were more likely to be female.

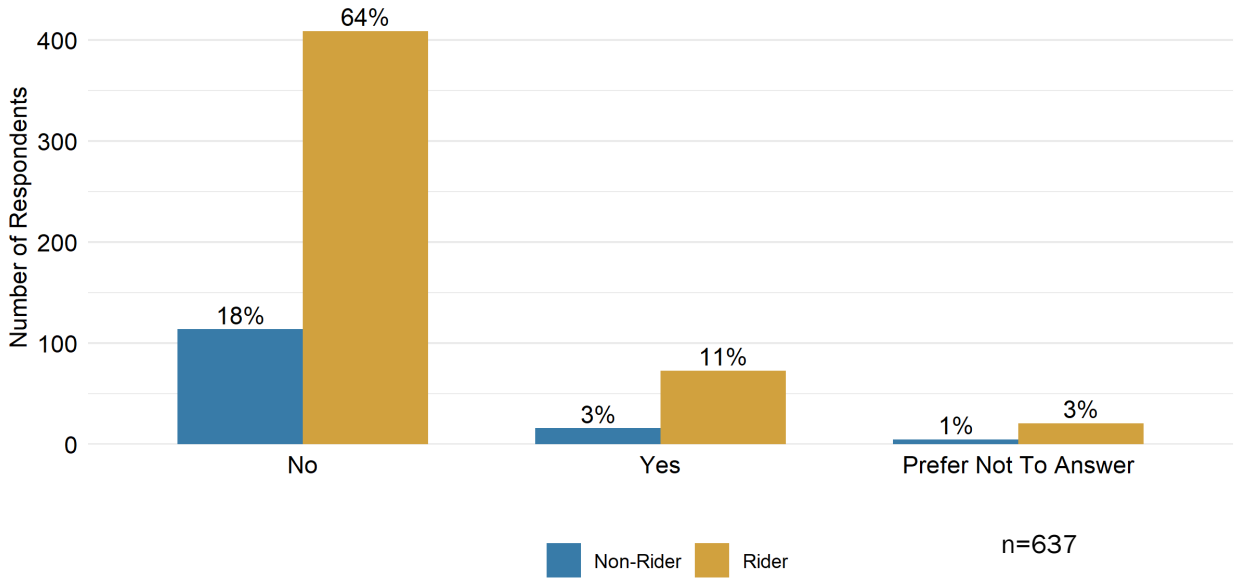
Figure 7: Survey Responses by Gender Identity



3.2.5. Disability

Figure 8 shows the disability status of survey respondents, broken out by rider status. Most respondents do not experience disabilities, although 11 percent of respondents are riders with a disability.

Figure 8: Survey Responses by Disability Status



3.2.6. Household Income

Figure 9 shows survey respondents' household income, broken out by rider status. Riders are likely to have much lower incomes than non-riders. Twenty-eight percent of respondents are riders with incomes less than $25,000, while the largest income category for non-riders was $100,000 - $150,000 (four percent of respondents). Figure 10 shows household income in Lawrence, KS from the U.S. Census Bureau. Nearly one-quarter of Lawrence households have income less than$24,999.

Figure 9: Survey Responses by Household Income

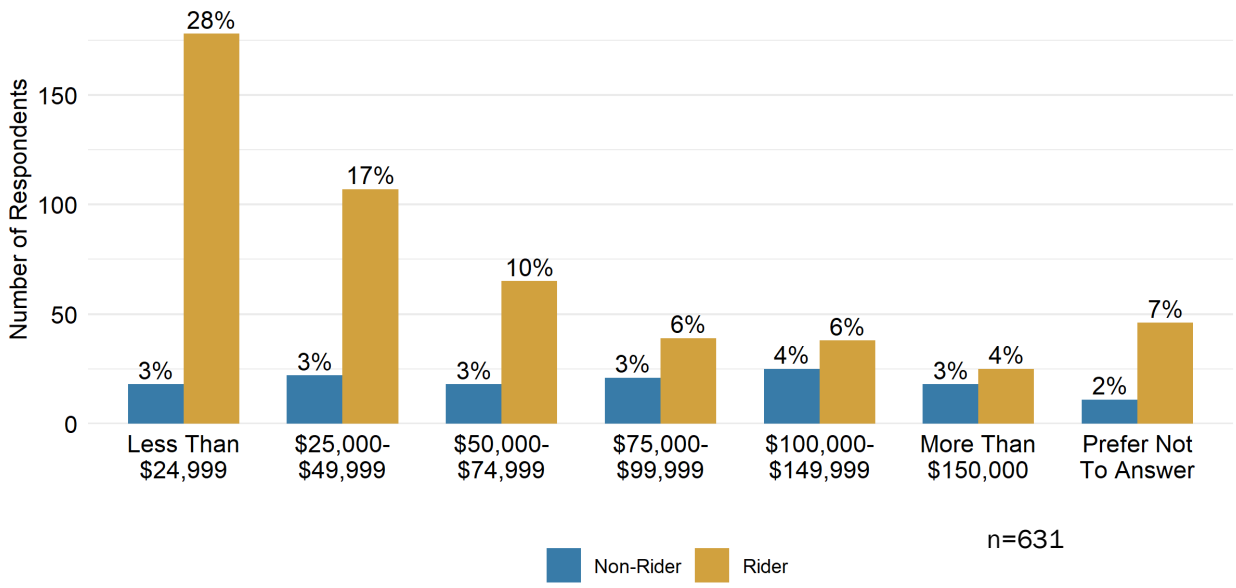
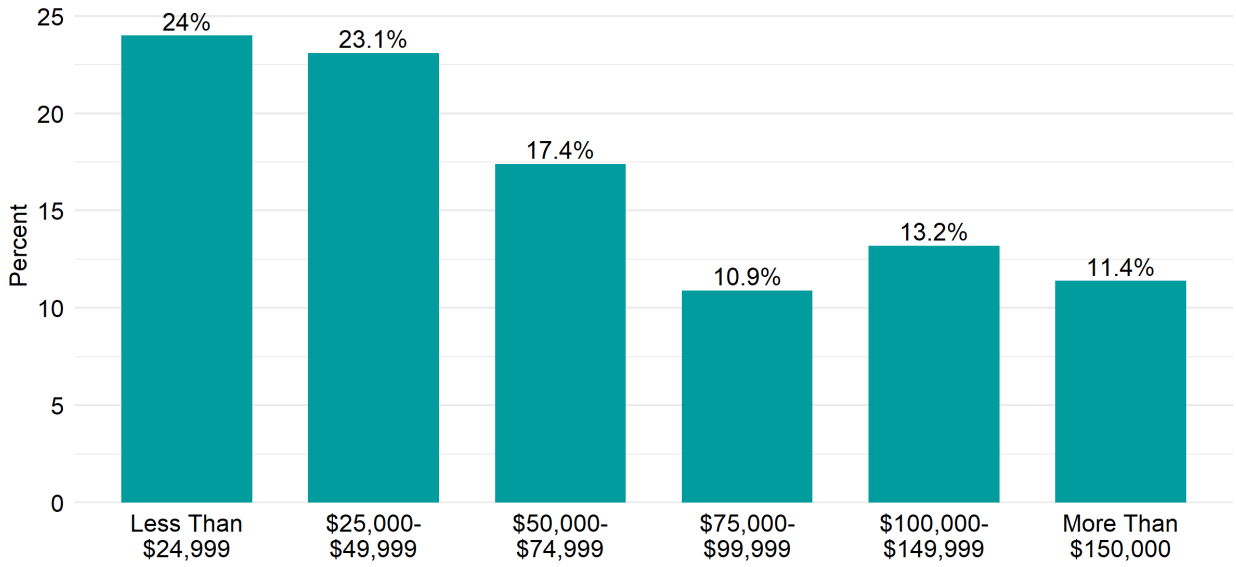


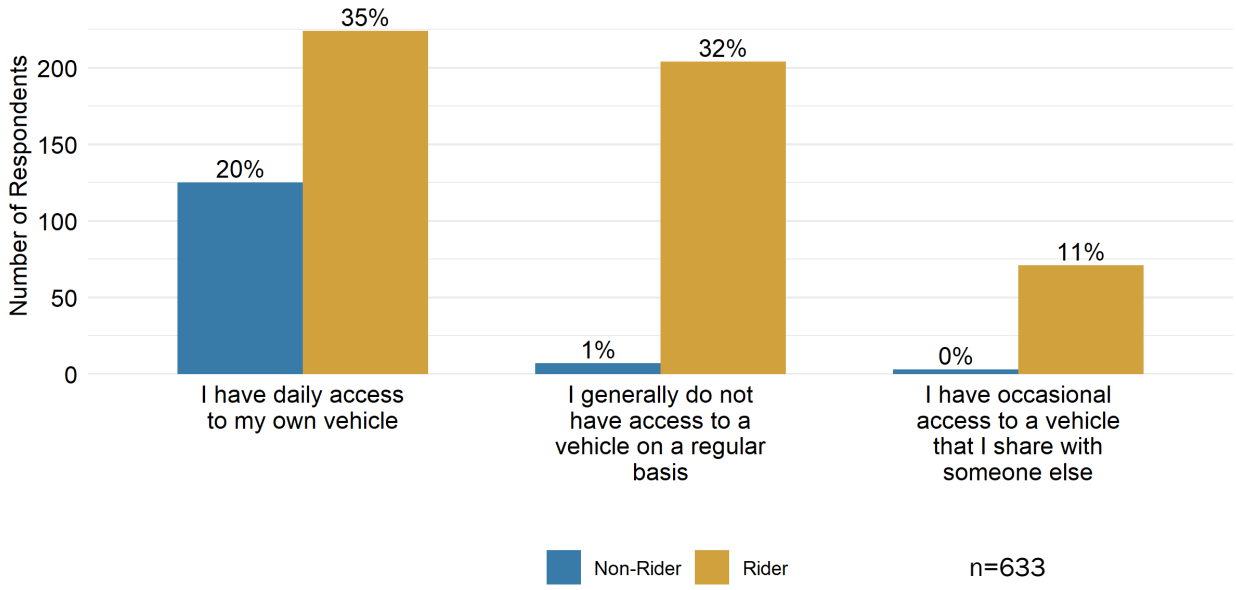
Figure 10: Household Income in Lawrence, U.S. Census Bureau (ACS 2019 5-year estimates)



3.2.7. Access to Personal Vehicle

Figure 11 shows respondents' access to a personal vehicle, broken out by rider status. Most respondents (59 percent), regardless of rider status, have daily access to their own vehicle. Riders who have access to their own vehicle (36 percent of all respondents) are likely "choice" riders, who could use alternate modes, but choose to use transit instead. A little over one-quarter of respondents (28 percent) are riders who do not have access to a personal vehicle, who are likely "captive" riders, in that they do not have other transportation choices.

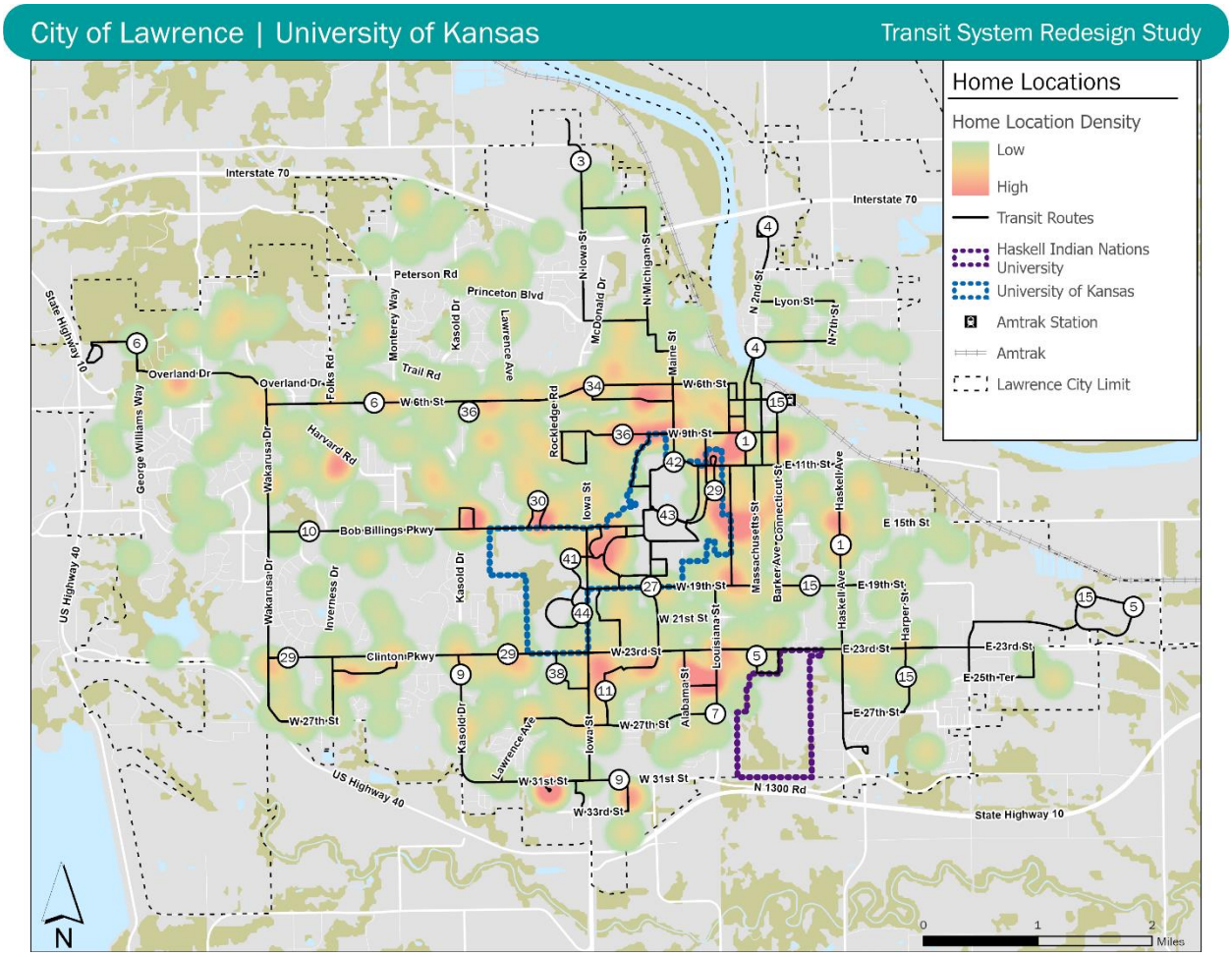
Figure 11: Survey Responses by Access to a Personal Vehicle



3.2.8. Home Location

Figure 12 shows reported home locations of survey respondents. Respondents were able to choose a location on a map or provide an address or nearest intersection. There are high concentrations of home locations near KU, along Bob Billings Parkway, along 23rd Street, and along 31st Street.

Figure 12: Home Locations



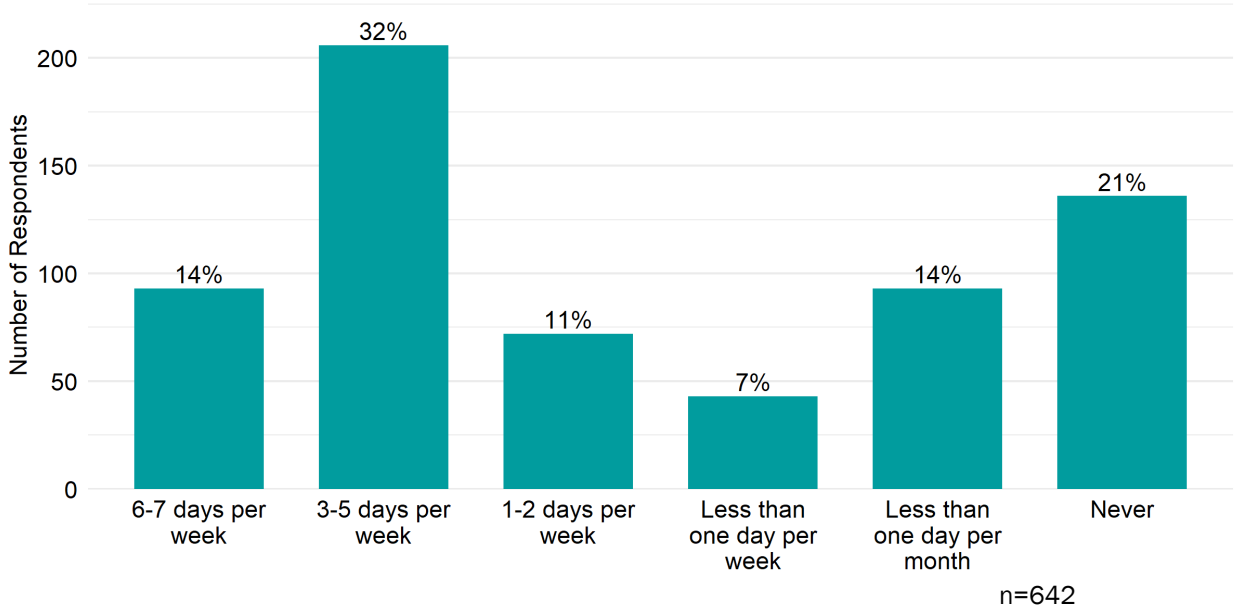
3.3. Rider Status

Survey respondents were asked several questions about their transit usage. This includes how often they ride transit, their opinions about transit service in Lawrence, and their reasons for either using or not using transit.

3.3.1. Frequency of Transit Usage

Figure 13 shows survey respondents' frequency of transit ridership. Survey respondents were most likely to either be regular riders, riding transit 3-5 days a week (32 percent of respondents) or non-riders, who never ride transit (21 percent of respondents).

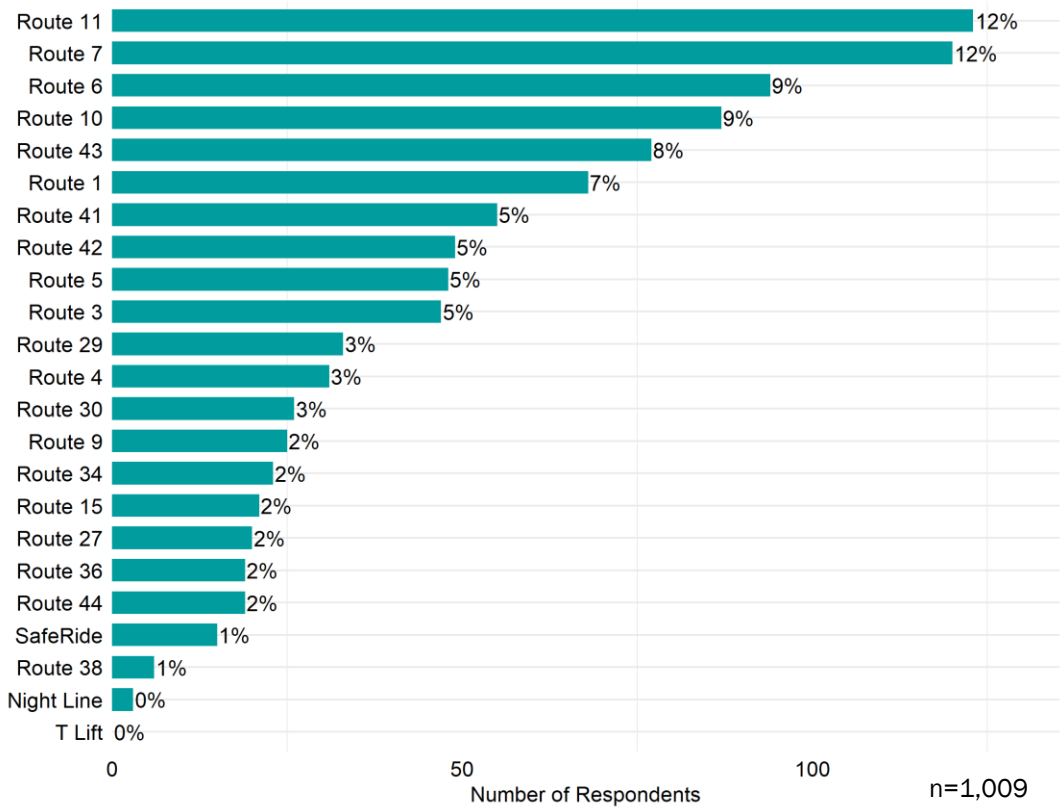
Figure 13: Survey Responses by Ridership Frequency



3.3.2. Routes Used

Survey respondents who ride transit were asked to provide up to three routes that they ride regularly. **Figure 14** shows the total number of times that each route was mentioned. Routes 11, 7, 6, and 10 were the most commonly cited routes that respondents ride regularly.

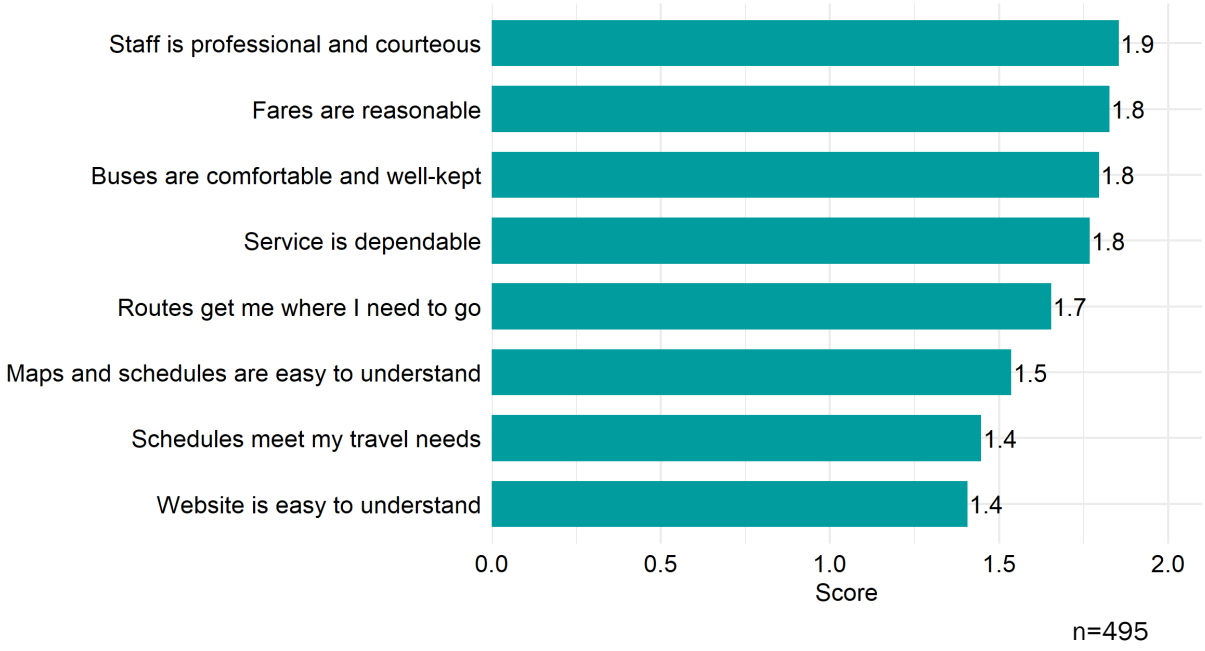
Figure 14: Routes Used Most Often by Survey Respondents



3.3.3. Rider Opinions

Respondents who ride transit were asked whether they agreed, disagreed, or were neutral about a variety of statements about transit services in Lawrence. In **Figure 15**, a score of 2 represents "agree", a score of 0 represents "disagree", and a score of 1 represents a "neutral" response. A higher average score indicates a more positive association. Transit service scores most highly in professional and courteous staff, reasonable fares, and comfortable and well-kept buses. At 1.4, a score in between "neutral" and "agree", the lowest-scoring statements were the ease of understanding the website and schedules that meet travel needs.

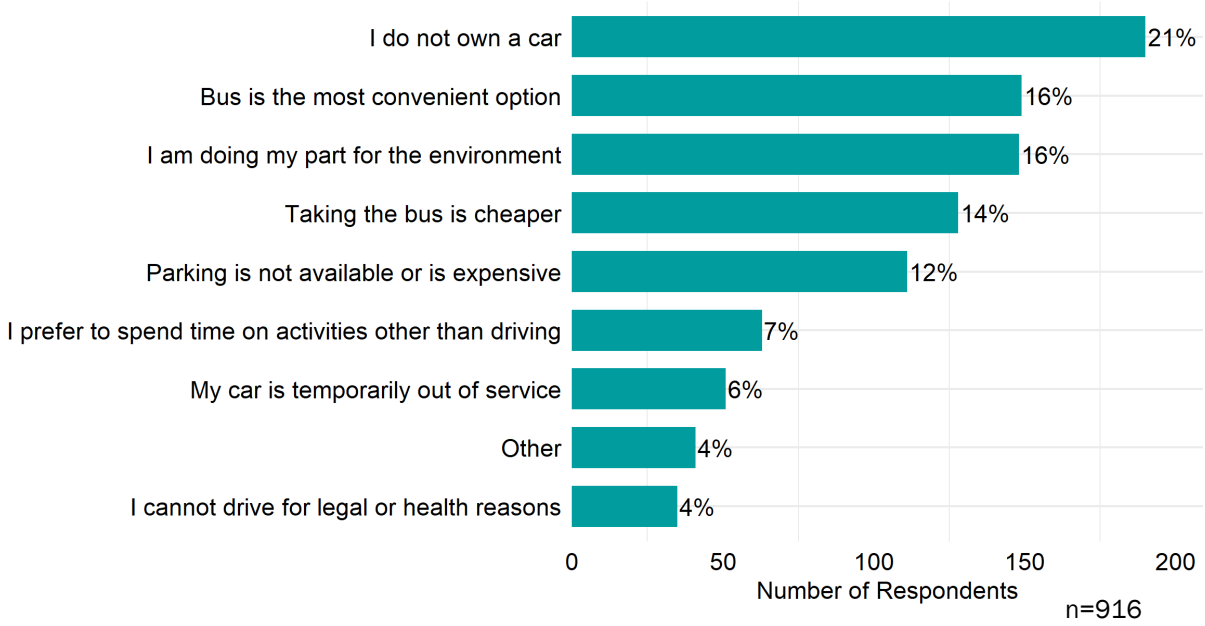
Figure 15: Survey Respondents' Opinions About Transit Service



3.3.4. Reasons for Transit Use

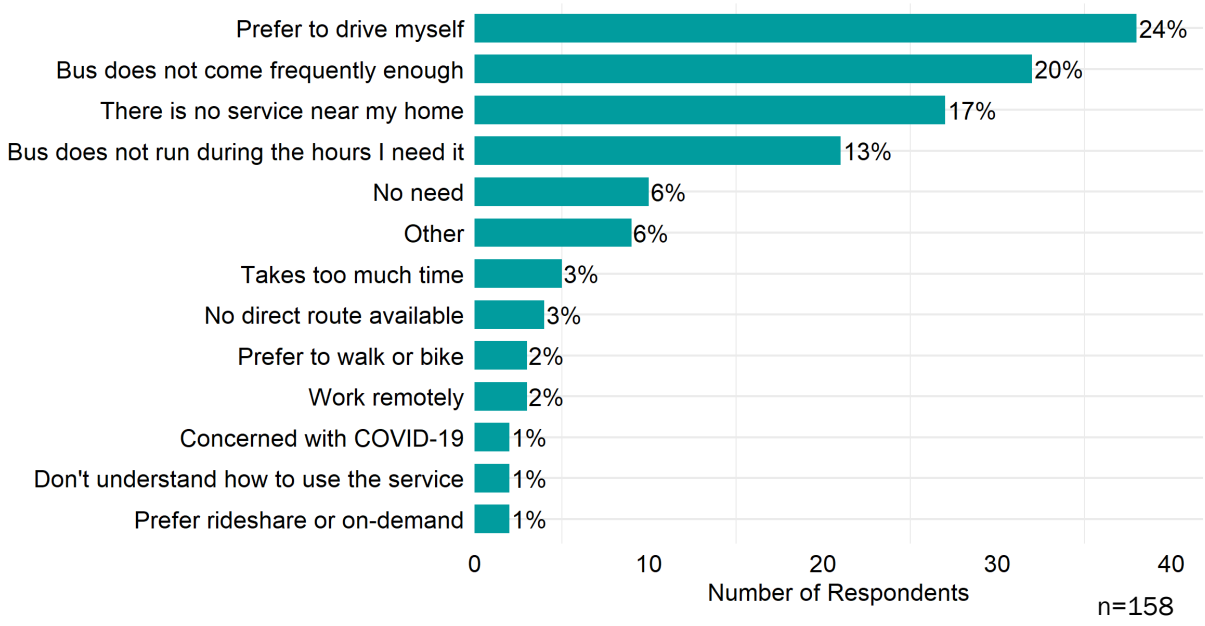
Respondents who ride transit at least occasionally were asked why they ride transit. Respondents could select as many responses as they liked. **Figure 16** shows that the top reason for riding transit was not owning a car, followed by the bus being convenient, and a belief that riders are doing their part for the environment.

Figure 16: Reasons Why Respondents Use Transit



Similarly, respondents who reported never riding transit were asked why they do not ride. **Figure 17** shows these results. Non-riders reported not riding transit primarily because they have access to and prefer to use a personal vehicle. However, the next reasons were the bus not coming frequently enough and lack of bus service near the respondents' home. Other concerns, like the lack of service hours, long travel times, or lack of a direct route were also mentioned.

Figure 17: Reasons Why Non-Riders Do Not Ride Transit



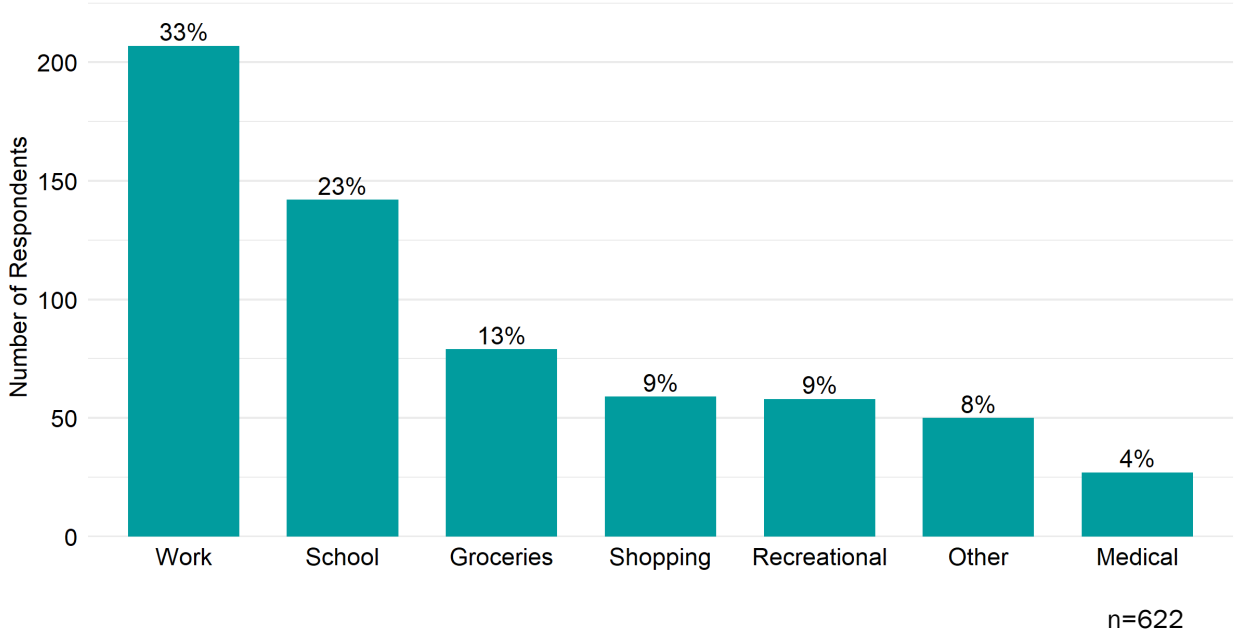
3.4. Most Common Trip

Survey respondents who ride transit were asked details about the most common transit trip that they take.

3.4.1. Purpose

Figure 18 shows the most common trip purposes. Work accounts for one-third of all trips, while school trips account for nearly one-quarter.

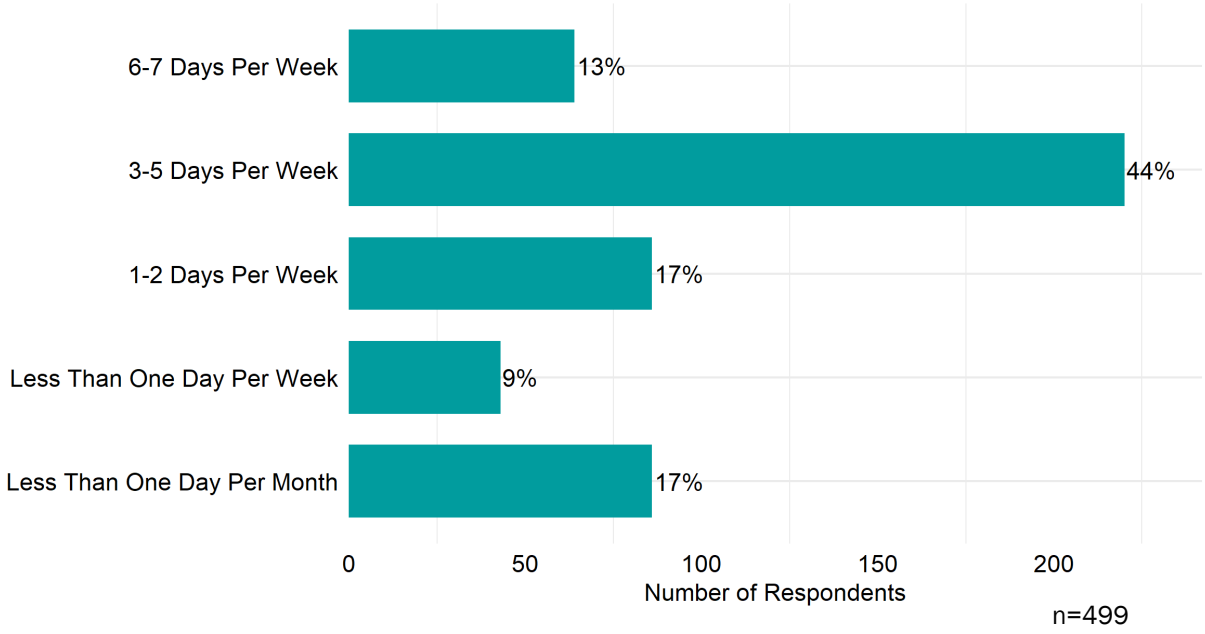
Figure 18: Most Common Trip Purposes



3.4.2. Frequency of Trips

Figure 19 shows frequency of trips. Nearly half of all reported trips are taken 3-5 days per week.

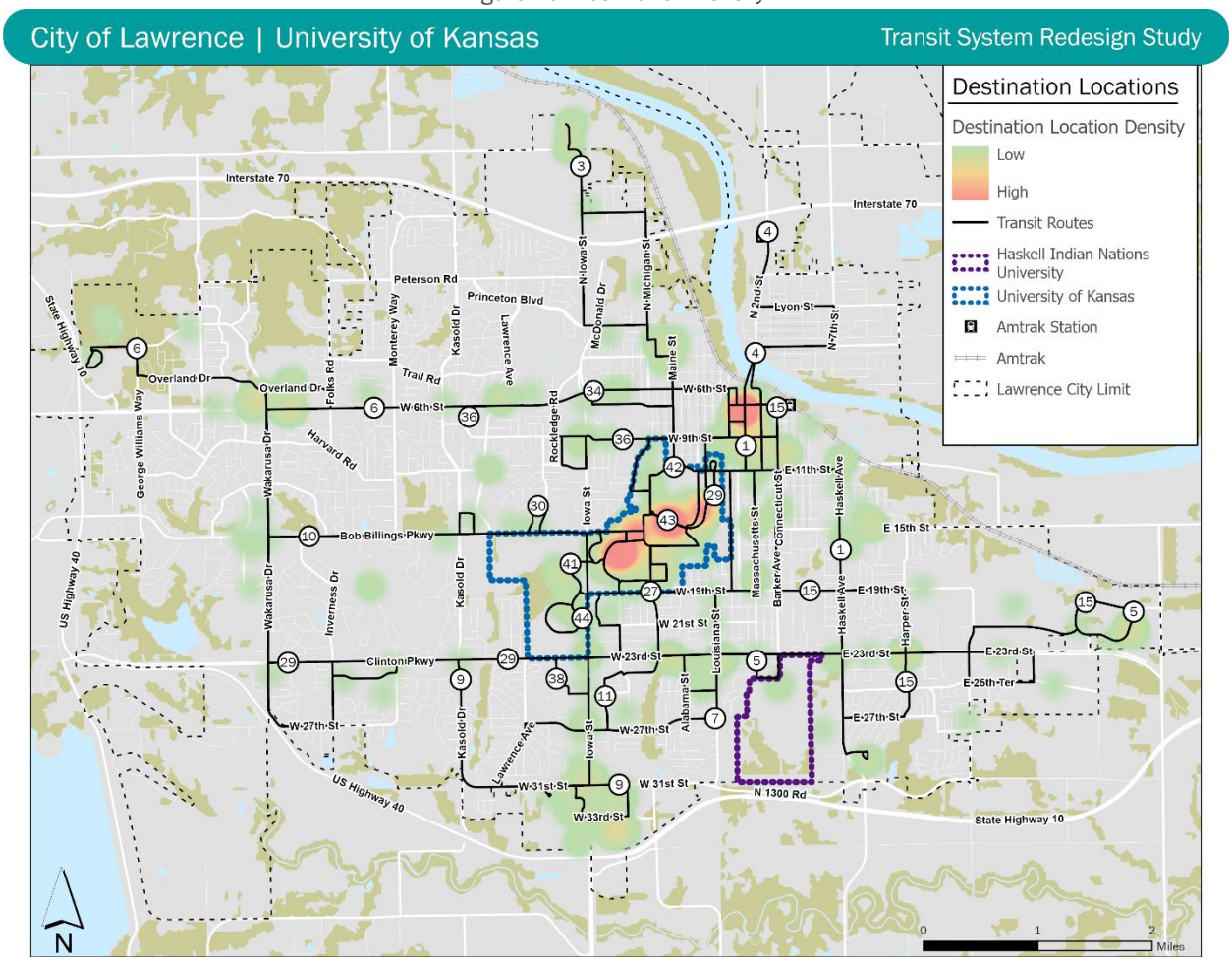
Figure 19: Riders' Frequency of Trips



3.4.3. Destinations

Respondents were asked to locate their trip destination on a map or alternatively, provide an address or the nearest intersection. Common destinations appear in **Figure 20**. The most common destinations are KU and downtown Lawrence, with less common destinations spread out throughout Lawrence.

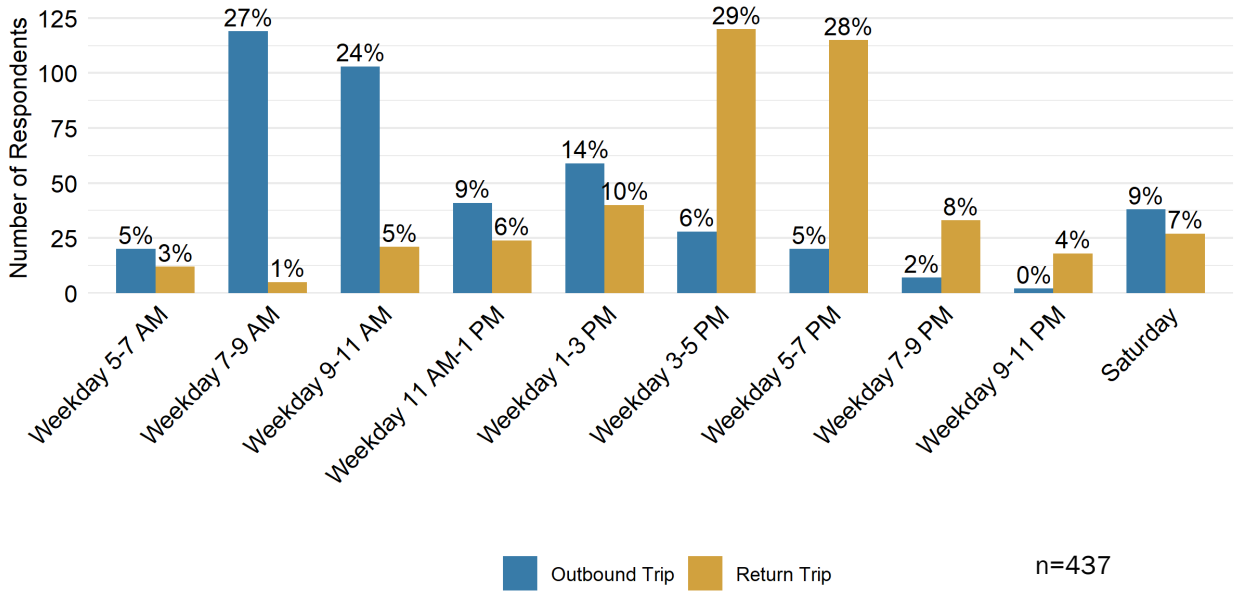
Figure 20: Destination Density



3.4.4. Time Period

Figure 21 shows the most common time periods for both the outbound and return portions of respondents' most common transit trips. Half of outbound trips occur during weekday morning peaks (between 7:00 a.m. and 11:00 a.m.), with another 15 percent occurring during weekday early afternoon (1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m.) and another nine percent on Saturdays. Similarly, over half of return trips occur during weekday afternoon peaks (from 3:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.), with early afternoons representing an additional 10 percent of trips.

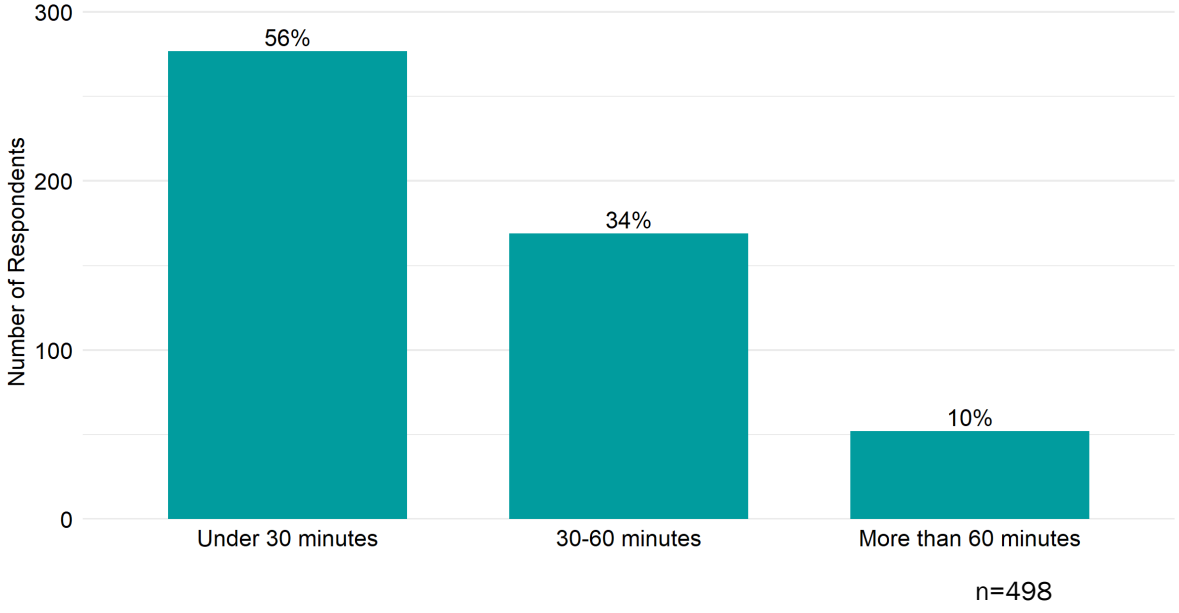
Figure 21: Time Periods of Outbound and Return Trips



3.4.5. Time Duration

Figure 22 shows the duration of respondents' most common transit trip. Over half of trips are under 30 minutes, one-third are between 30 and 60 minutes, and only 10 percent are longer than one hour.

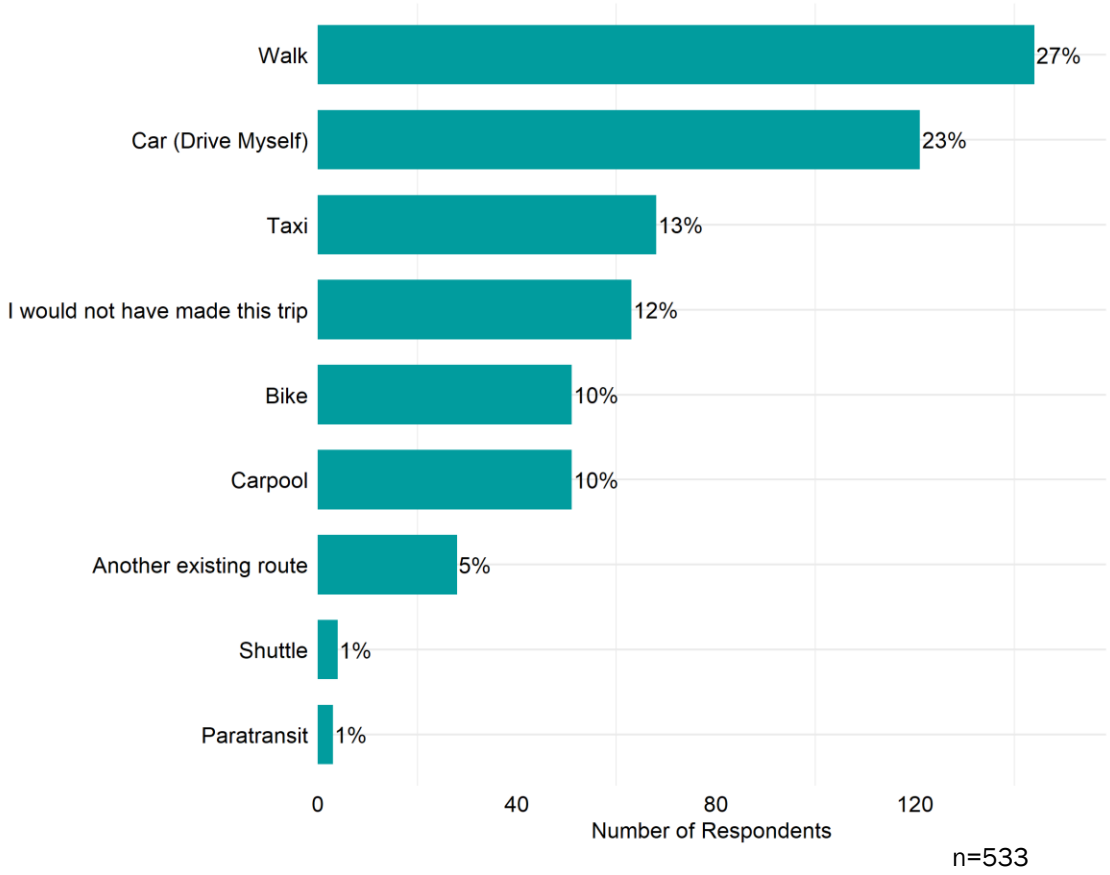
Figure 22: Time Duration of Most Common Trip



3.4.6. Alternative Mode

Respondents were asked how they would have completed their most common trip if transit was not available. **Figure 23** shows these responses. Over one-quarter of respondents would have chosen to walk, while just under one-quarter would have driven themselves. Taxi, bike, and carpool each represented around one-tenth of respondents, and 12 percent said they would not have made this trip at all.

Figure 23: Alternative Modes



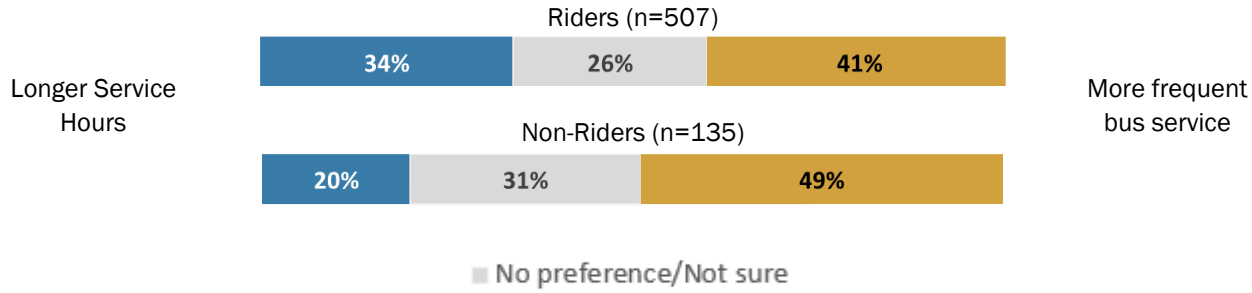
4. TRADE-OFF QUESTIONS

Survey respondents and focus group attendees were asked a series of trade-off questions about their preferences for transit service. The trade-off questions reflect the fact that budgets are constrained and not all improvements are possible; the responses to these questions can help planners decide which improvements are most beneficial to the community. Results are reported broken out by rider status and the number of respondents in each group is given, as more riders responded to the survey than non-riders.

4.1. Longer Service Hours vs. More Frequent Bus Service

Figure 24 shows survey respondents' preferences. Both riders and non-riders prefer more frequent bus service over longer service hours. Non-riders have a stronger preference, and riders' preferences are closer to being split between the two options.

Figure 24: Preferences Between Longer Service Hours vs. More Frequent Bus Service

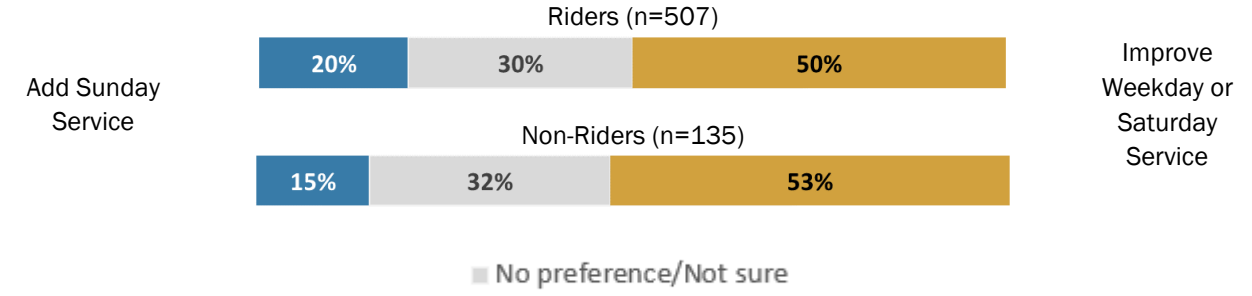


Most of the focus groups preferred more frequent service, including the university group, the staff group, and the public focus group. The community resources group preferred longer service hours, since many activities happen later and waiting for a bus is better than having no bus at all. The public focus group mentioned that many buses seem to be empty in the evenings, so extending service did not seem worth it.

4.2. Adding Sunday Service vs. Improving Weekday or Saturday Service

Figure 25 shows survey respondents' preferences. Both riders and non-riders prefer to improve weekday or Saturday service rather than adding Sunday service, at around 50 percent of respondents in each group.

Figure 25: Preferences Between Adding Sunday Service vs. Improving Existing Service



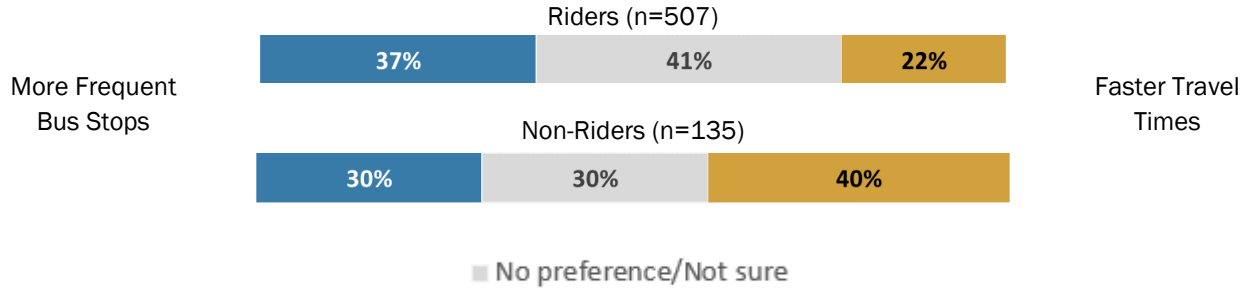
Focus group respondents, on the other hand, were more likely to talk about the benefits of Sunday service and to brainstorm ways to make it possible. The University focus group mentioned that Sunday service is important for international students as they are unlikely to own a car, and therefore do not have another means of transport on Sundays. The staff group thought that Sunday service could start as a flex zone, rather than a fixed route service, which would allow people to get around on Sundays without committing too many resources. The community resources group was not convinced that Sunday service is necessary, although they

also thought that a Sunday on-demand service would be a helpful way to start Sunday services. Sunday service was a priority in the public focus group.

4.3. More Frequent Bus Stops vs. Faster Travel Times

Figure 26 shows survey respondents' preferences. Riders preferred more frequent bus stops, while non-riders preferred faster travel times.

Figure 26: Preferences Between More Frequent Bus Stops vs. Faster Travel Times

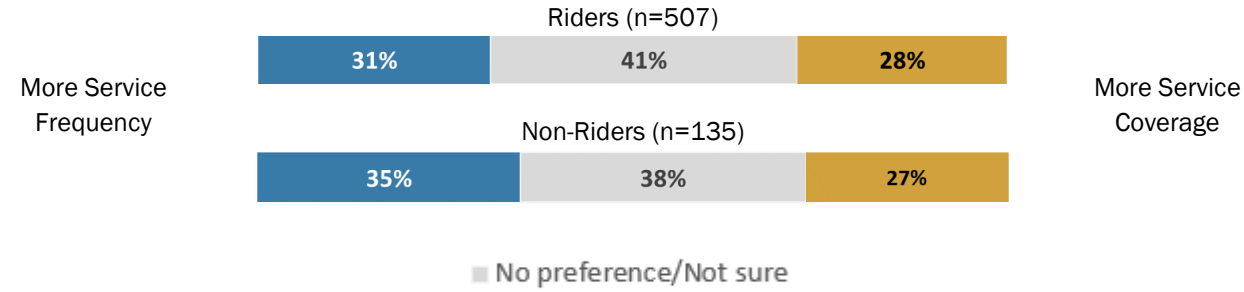


Focus group participants also expressed divergent views. The University and community resources groups both voiced the opinion that it depends on who a route is serving – students and elderly riders have different preferences. While students might be happy to walk farther for a faster travel time, elderly riders or riders with disabilities might prefer more frequent bus stops to avoid traveling farther. Poor weather conditions were also cited as a reason for more frequent bus stops. Staff also noted that elderly clients would also like more stops with shelters. In the public focus group, one person mentioned that routes 1 and 6 need more frequent stops because of the type of road that they traverse.

4.4. More Service Frequency vs. More Service Coverage

Figure 27 shows survey respondents' preferences. Both riders and non-riders preferred more service frequency rather than more service coverage, although riders were close to being split on this question.

Figure 27: Preferences Between More Service Frequency vs. More Service Coverage

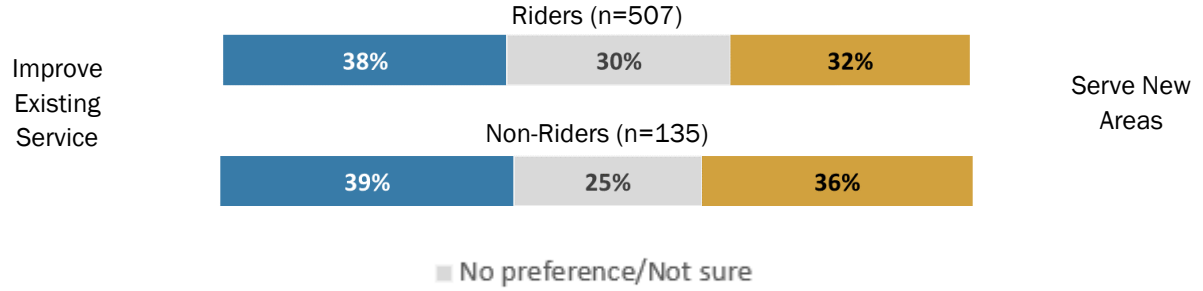


All of the focus groups preferred more service coverage, contrary to the survey results. The staff believe that routing through neighborhoods, like route 11, works better than serving major thoroughfares because the bus is more a part of the community. Other reasons include the fact that many main roads are not safe for pedestrians. Staff preferred service coverage over frequency because they noted that Lawrence is expanding, and the service will need to expand to serve more residents.

4.5. Improve Existing Service vs. Serve New Areas

Figure 28 shows survey respondents' preferences. Both riders and non-riders preferred to improve existing services rather than serve new areas, although the numbers were close.

Figure 28: Preferences Between Improving Existing Service vs. Serving New Areas

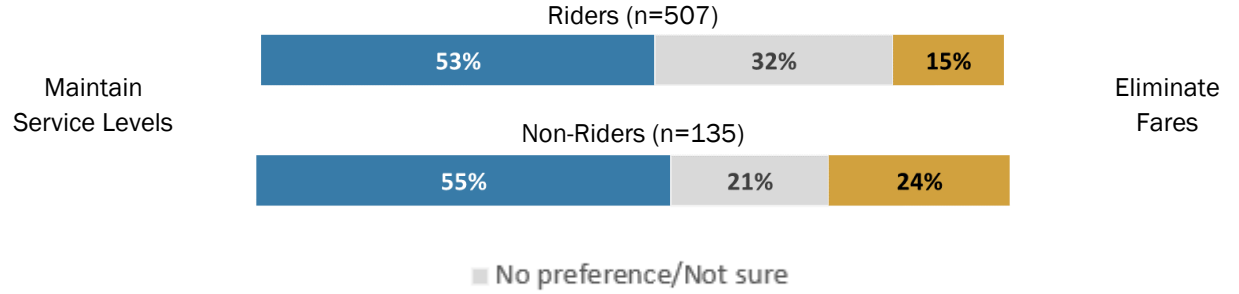


Focus group attendees did not necessarily show a preference for serving new areas but did spend time talking about areas in Lawrence that may warrant new service. The community resources group identified North Lawrence is one neighborhood that could use more service and noted that it is a more established neighborhood deserving of bus service. West of Wakarusa also does not have service but has traditionally been a place where residents with cars live. However, there are new apartment buildings being built, possibly warranting new service, although some participants thought that residents might oppose 40-foot buses going through those communities.

4.6. Maintain Service Levels vs. Eliminate Fares

Figure 29 shows survey respondents' preference. Riders and on-riders preferred maintaining service levels rather than eliminating fares, with over half of each group responding in support. One-third of riders and one-fifth of non-riders did not have a preference. Non-riders were more likely to support eliminating fares than riders. Many survey respondents wrote free-response comments at the end of the survey about fare policy, with many supporting the idea of reduced or free fares, but wary of potential service cuts.

Figure 29: Preferences Between Maintaining Service Levels vs. Eliminating Fares



However, focus groups respondents strongly supported eliminating fares and mentioned the possibility of at least providing free fares for low-income residents. The staff focus group supported reducing fares, since many passengers cannot afford to pay, but they were also concerned about where the money for operations would come from.

5. FREE RESPONSES

Survey respondents who left additional comments were mostly likely to write in about route suggestions (43 responses); fares (25 responses), mostly requesting free fares systemwide or a free fare program for low-income riders; adding Sunday service (17 responses); more frequent service (16 responses); and adding bus stop amenities such as benches and shelters (11 responses). Focus group attendees also had route suggestions.

5.1. Route Suggestions

While route suggestions varied, Route 11 was mentioned frequently with requests to leave this route unchanged, often coming from students. Respondents requesting more frequent service also often mentioned Route 11.

"Route 11 should not be changed. Each morning during the fall and spring semesters the buses are fully packed with students traveling from the apartments (Reserve, Spanish Crest) to campus."

Other route suggestions include:

- Address crowding on Route 30 during peak periods.
- Add service to the airport.
- Reroute Route 10 to serve Rock Chalk Park.

5.2. Fares

Of respondents who mentioned fares, the most common responses were requests to make service free and the suggestion to have a reduced or free-fare program for low-income riders. Four respondents asked about specific fare pass products such as monthly or weekly passes, and three respondents requested that fares be free without reducing service levels. Two respondents requested raising fares. Some sample responses are below.

"I believe fares are a fiscal burden for some low-income passengers, and low-income individuals are more likely to depend on the bus service. I would like to see some mechanism to try to reduce/eliminate fares for at least some passengers, either through some system based on eligibility, or eliminating fares at certain stops in low-income neighborhoods."

"I would love to see a creative use of funding to eliminate fares, but not at the cost of service reductions."

"I love that we live in such a bus-friendly city. It should be a priority to make the routes as accessible as possible to all residents in Lawrence. If everyone had access to free bus service, it could improve the lives of many, which trickles into the city as a whole. We would benefit environmentally and economically."

5.3. Other Comments

Other notable comments often centered around requests for additional service, like more frequent service, Sunday service, or late-night service. People frequently requested more shelters and benches at stops to make waiting for the bus more pleasant and manageable. Drivers requested more bathroom accessibility during their focus group, and one participant requested an information booth at the new transfer hub.